

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



FOUNDED 1917



Snowy Plover at the Crissy Field Wildlife Protection Area.

Local Habitats Essential For the Snowy Plover

Snowy Plovers at the Presidio's Crissy Field Wildlife Protection Area and at Ocean Beach in San Francisco remain resilient to disturbance and faithful to the two sites, data collected by Golden Gate Audubon volunteers show.

Dedicated Golden Gate Audubon birders led by Matt Zlatunich continued their seventh year of monitoring at Crissy Field and provided the latest report for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The data and reports have been used by the National Park Service to manage the Wildlife Protection Area (WPA) and reduce disturbances to the plovers. The reports have also contributed to long-range planning documents such as the GGNRA Dog Management Plan.

Snowy Plovers spend their "winters" at the WPA and at Ocean Beach, though the beaches of San Francisco are really their homes from July through March of most years—meaning they spend more time on their wintering grounds than they do on their breeding grounds. Therefore, the quality of the wintering grounds—the availability of food and restful roosting areas—is important to the recovery of the species.

At the Wildlife Protection Area, observers record the number of Snowy Plovers observed per hour as well as the number of recreational users. Activities of the users and the presence of dogs are divided into categories such as "walkers," "joggers,"

Volunteers Honored With Annual Awards

Two dedicated Golden Gate Audubon volunteers—Hilary Powers and Kisha Mitchell-Mellor—shared the 2012 Paul Covel Conservation Education Award, handed out on May 10 at the third annual Birdathon Celebration Dinner. The 2012 Elsie Roemer Conservation Award went to an entire team of volunteers—the seven people who oversaw the research, writing, and production of the *Alameda County Breeding Bird Atlas*.

ELSIE ROEMER CONSERVATION AWARDEES

Dinner attendees were lucky that it didn't take as long to hand out the award for the Alameda County atlas as it did to write it—19 years. Work on the 220-page book began in 1992 spearheaded by the late ornithologist Howard Cogswell. It was a true group effort, with more than 100 birders helping to survey the county between 1993 and 1997. But the heaviest lifting was done by the seven award winners—Bob Richmond, Helen Green, David Burt, Emily Scott, Ellis Myers, Kay Longman, and Doug Peeters. Bob wrote the 175 species accounts, and Helen and David edited them. Rusty created the maps. Hans provided illustrations, and Ellis designed the book. Kay handled the bibliography.

"These seven volunteers represent the talent, energy, and commitment of Golden Gate

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415.681.7422

The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership is \$35 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets six times per year (schedule can be obtained from the main office).

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For Nature Store hours, please call or check the website.

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GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON LAUNCHES BLOG

We're delighted to introduce *Golden Gate Birder*, a blog written by Golden Gate Audubon staff and members to share small bites of local birding news and inspiration a couple of times each week.

You can view *Golden Gate Birder* at www.goldengateaudubon.org/blog. Then, if you'd like, you can click a button to subscribe by e-mail and get new posts delivered directly to your inbox.

Interested in writing for *Golden Gate Birder*? We're seeking GGAS members who'd like to contribute reviews of birding books and equipment and posts on birding locations, or to share insight on birds and other wildlife. E-mail us at idebare@goldengateaudubon.org for more information.

PHOTO CONTEST FOR 2013 CALENDAR

Golden Gate Audubon is producing a 2013 wall calendar featuring birds of the San Francisco Bay—and we need your photos!

If you are interested in participating, you can submit up to three color photographs of birds taken in the nine-county Bay Area: San Francisco, Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma. The photos must be high resolution (printable at 300 dpi at a size of 9 by 12 inches). Include your name, the bird species, the location where the photo was taken, and any other relevant details about the bird or photograph. Please e-mail photos to Development Director Lisa Owens Viani at lowensvi@goldengateaudubon.org.

Winners will be chosen by Golden Gate Audubon staff and will receive a copy of the calendar. Submission deadline is July 15.

Thanks for sharing your work! Proceeds from calendar sales will help us protect birds and their habitats—and your work will inspire bird lovers throughout 2013.

LEAVE A BAY AREA LEGACY

Do you love birds and open spaces? Would you like to see them preserved for future generations? If so, consider leaving a legacy of conservation by including Golden Gate Audubon in your estate planning. Your bequest can make a difference by enabling us to protect and restore more acres of habitat for birds and other wildlife and to educate the conservationists of the future through our award-winning Eco-Education programs in Oakland, Richmond, and San Francisco schools. Call Lisa Owens Viani at 510.843.7295 for more information or to receive our Leaving a Legacy brochure.



Allen Hirsch received a prize in the Birdathon Facebook photo contest for this image of a White-breasted Nuthatch.

Birdathon 2012: Record Breakers and Triple Generations

This may have been Golden Gate Audubon's third annual Birdathon, but it was anything but routine.

Held throughout April and culminating in a festive awards dinner on May 10, Birdathon 2012 attracted a number of high-powered teams of competitive birders, including one that set a new big day record for Alameda County. At the other end of the spectrum, the people on one team had never birded before, and another team had three generations of birders from a single family, including a two-year-old. Yet another team even signed up a migratory visitor—human, not avian—from the distant habitat of Dorset, England.

ANNUAL AWARDS from page 1

Audubon's serious birders, and through citizen science they have added tremendously to the data available to scientists and policy makers," said GGAS Executive Director Mark Welther.

Copies of the atlas are available at the Golden Gate Audubon office. All serious Bay Area birders should have one for their library!

PAUL COVEL CONSERVATION EDUCATION AWARDS

Award winner Hilary Powers is a familiar figure to anyone who has enjoyed one of the bird walks around Lake Merritt that she coleads with Ruth Tobey. Hilary's love for children and birds brought her to our Eco-Education program around 2006. Since

Best of all, Birdathon 2012 raised \$30,000 to support the conservation and environmental education work of Golden Gate Audubon, up from \$28,000 last year.

Among Birdathon competitors, the awards for most species spotted in 24 hours in Alameda County and in California went to Team DMZ, made up of Dominik Moser, Zachary Baer, and Michael Park. They spotted 172 species in 24 hours—nailing not only those Birdathon honors but a new big day record for Alameda County.

The prize for most birds spotted in 24 hours in San Francisco County went to the Rockin' TVs—Eddie Bartley, Noreen Weeden, Christine Okon, Mary Krentz,

and Steve Stemle—for their total of 109 species. Reeling the Birdathon awards ceremony, the TVs also took prizes for most species in four hours in Alameda County (101), most species in four hours in California (101), and most species in four hours in San Francisco (97).

The Contra Costa 24-hour prize went to the team of Jack Dumbacher, David and Margaret Mindell, and Logan Kahle, who sighted 140 species. The Contra Costa four-hour prize went to the three-generation team of Louise Harin, Jacqueline Crane, and two-year-old Cora Fivol. That team set out more for fun than glory, but still

BIRDATHON 2012 continued on page 7

then she has saved the day on countless field trips along creeks and wetland trails. Her wealth of knowledge, boundless energy, and steady cheer have contributed immensely to the success of our environmental education programs. Her monthly Lake Merritt field trips continue to build a devoted following for the lake and its wildlife.

Covel award recipient Lakisha "Kisha" Mitchell-Mellor came to Golden Gate Audubon through an internship with our habitat restoration projects at the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline in Oakland. Devoting much more time and energy than required by the internship, Kisha garnered a reputation among staff members as a committed and concerned conservationist. They quickly snatched her up to volunteer with youth programs. For the past

few years, while homeschooling her children, Kisha has managed to make time to lead restoration activities during field trips along Arrowhead Marsh at the MLK shoreline, at Point Pinole Regional Shoreline, and at various creek sites.

ABOUT THE AWARDS

Elsie Roemer (1893–1991) was an educator and activist who successfully worked to protect wetlands in Alameda. The Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary in Alameda is named in her honor.

Paul Covell (1909–1990) was a park naturalist and educator who inspired many children and adults through his pioneering interpretive programs at Lake Merritt. He was a recipient of the Elsie Roemer Award in 1989.



Bob Richmond, David Rice, Rusty Scalf, and Helen Green (from left), five members of the team that produced the Alameda County atlas.



Kisha Mitchell-Mellor, winner of a 2012 education award, presented at the Birdathon dinner.

Travel with Golden Gate Audubon—New Mexico

Spaces are still available for two trips this summer to northern New Mexico. Rich Cimino of Yellowbilled Tours is the guide for the trips, August 13–17 and August 20–24. This area of the state has an astonishing variety of habitats: plains, grasslands, deep canyons, and pine and juniper forests situated on the spine of the Continental Divide. Participants will see species found both west and east of the Divide. Fall migration for both Great Basin land birds and raptors

begins in August. The Santa Fe Indian Market starts August 18, and though it is not part of the tour, participants may want to visit this popular market.

Cost per person is \$625, which includes a \$50 donation to Golden Gate Audubon and covers ground transportation, guide services, and park entry fees. Not included are airfare, lodging, and meals. Each trip is limited to four birders. Travel will be in a small, comfortable vehicle.

To register for the trips or obtain detailed itineraries, contact travel coordinator Pat Kirkpatrick, patkirkpatrick14@gmail.com.

Observations Online

Bruce Mast's column covering notable bird sightings in April and May can be found on the Golden Gate Audubon website under Birding Resources.

Donations

Many thanks to our generous donors! Donations from March 17, 2012, to May 25, 2012.

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SPEAKER SERIES

Birds and Their "Bugs," Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea

Jack Dumbacher

San Francisco: Thursday, July 19—7 p.m. refreshments, 7:30 program

The oceanic islands off the southeastern tip of Papua New Guinea are biologically interesting and yet poorly known. Most of the significant ornithological expeditions took place in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and these visited only the largest islands. In 2009 and 2011, a team from California Academy of Sciences chartered a small sailboat and spent 14 weeks visiting large and small islands, surveying birds, and collecting samples for studies of bird evolution and avian diseases. Jack Dumbacher, the expedition leader, will take you on a virtual tour of the islands, introduce you to the birds, and discuss the scientific goals of the expeditions.



Jack Dumbacher

Jack Dumbacher has worked in Papua New Guinea since 1989, when he studied Bagiana Birds of Paradise and their mating behavior. After being bitten by a poisonous bird (the Hooded Pitohui), he focused his PhD studies on chemical defense in birds. He worked at the Smithsonian Institution for six years studying bird genetics and evolution. Now, as the curator of birds and mammals at the California Academy of Sciences, he continues exploring these topics and is beginning new work to discover novel avian diseases.

San Francisco Speaker Series: First Unitarian Universalist Church and Center, 1187 Franklin Street at Geary. Visit www.uusf.org/visitors_faq.html, and use the Map It! link on the left for directions. Public transit, street parking, and parking in a lot for a fee are available.

Discover the Birds of Honduras

Robert Gallardo

Berkeley: Thursday, August 16—7 p.m. refreshments, 7:30 program

Central America is a birder's paradise that holds close to 10 percent of all the world's bird species, and Honduras is right in the middle of it. For the international community of birders, Honduras has always been shrouded in mystery and has only just begun to be discovered. It currently has almost 750 bird species, including many prized Mesoamerican endemics, such as the coveted Ocellated Quail, Keel-billed Motmot, and Lovely Cotinga, and the country's only known endemic, the Honduran Emerald.

The country boasts an extensive but underutilized national park system. Robert Gallardo will show vivid photos featuring the country's wonderful birds and many natural areas.

Robert Gallardo arrived in Honduras in 1993 as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer and has lived there ever since. He started a small eco-lodge and cofounded the Honduran Ornithological Society. For more than 12 years, he has worked as a professional bird guide. Golden Gate Audubon offered two trips to Honduras in 2011, both led by Robert. He is currently writing the definitive *Field Guide to the Birds of Honduras*, to be published in 2014.

Berkeley Speaker Series: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin)
Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.html.



La Mosquitia, a large tract of tropical rainforest

Robert Gallardo

A Well-Known Secret

Did you know that Golden Gate Audubon has a library in the Berkeley office? There are more than 325 volumes, recently shelved and organized into categories. They include field guides to North American birds and the birds of many specific states and regions, particularly California and the West. You can also find helpful guides to the birds of Europe, Great Britain, southern Africa, the Caribbean islands, the Pacific region, and many more. These guides would be very useful to look at if you're planning a trip.

In addition to field guides, the library contains numerous volumes of information about particular families of birds, such as woodpeckers, shorebirds, and owls. Coffee-table books of beautiful photographs or paintings are another category. Why not check one out for a couple of weeks just to enjoy at home?

Do you want to learn more about attracting birds to your garden? And once they're there, how to feed them? How about birdhouses? We have books on all these subjects, which never go out of date.

Most of these books have come to us through the generosity of our members. People who are downsizing often have to choose only a few treasured books to take with them. The others are very much at home in our library! Several duplicates identified during the organizing process are for sale at bargain prices.

So plan a visit to our office at 2530 San Pablo Avenue, peruse the library shelves, look over the used books for sale, and go home with some treasures. Office Manager John Trubina is there to help you between 1 and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.



FIELD TRIPS

STEVE LOMBARDI, COORDINATOR

\$ Entrance fee

 Biking trip

Field trips are open to members of all ages and levels of experience. To ensure the safety and enjoyment of participants, dogs are not allowed on trips. There are no exceptions to this policy unless expressly stated in the field trip announcement. For questions about individual field trips, contact the leader. For questions to the trips, go to: www.gchilren.org/fieldtrips.htm.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sundays, July 1, August 5, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Ginny Marshall, ginnybirders@sbcglobal.net; Dominik Mosur, polksatata@yahoo.com; Alan Ridley, allanrid@pacbell.net; Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241 (Leaders vary by month.)

Meet at the front gate of the garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. This monthly trip is oriented toward helping beginning birders develop their skills in spotting and identifying birds. The garden charges \$7 per person if you are not a San Francisco resident or a garden member. Bring identification for residency and membership status.

Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

Friday, July 6, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Kaplan, 510.526.7609 (messages), LNKPLN@earthlink.net

Meet at the Tilden Nature Area/Little Farm parking lot for the first Friday birdwalk. Today's theme: the breeding bird atlases of Alameda and Contra Costa. Restrooms at the start and end; water at the start and midway. Walking is on a flat road and an easy trail with some switchbacks.

Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

Friday, July 13, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Kaplan, 510.526.7609 (messages), LNKPLN@earthlink.net

Meet at the Big Springs Canyon pullout on South Park Dr. (just southwest and uphill from the Regional Parks Botanic Garden) for the second Friday GGAS birdwalk. The road/trail is uneven and rocky in places. This is the place to see Rufous-crowned Sparrow! Restrooms at the Botanic Garden parking lot. Bring water.

Aquatic Park and Waterfront

San Francisco

Saturdays, July 14, August 11, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

Carol Kiser, 415.447.5000

On this walk for children and beginners, and all others, we will look for resident and migrating birds. Meet at the entrance to the Hyde Street Pier at Hyde and Jefferson on the western border of Fisherman's Wharf. Nearby parking is at the foot of Van Ness Ave. (free for 4 hours), Ghirardelli Square, and the Anchorage.

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Fridays, July 20, August 17, 8 – 10 a.m.

Brian Fitch; Dominik Mosur, polksatata@yahoo.com (Leaders vary by month.)

Meet in front of the Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, at the end of Museum Way off Roosevelt. We will enjoy views of the city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking the east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitoring the hilltop scrub and south cliff.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland, Alameda County

Wednesdays, July 25, August 22, 9:30 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066, hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey, 510.528.2093, ruthsobey@gmail.com

Meet at the large spherical cage near the Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue. We will bird around there, then go up the garden path toward Children's Fairyland or walk down the lake toward Embarcadero, after which we will cover what we missed. The summer is the slow season at Lake Merritt, but we should see some

cormorants busy in the rookery and some woodpecker action in the park—and Hank the Pelican is likely to have lots of friends and relatives vacationing with him. And there's always a chance of other wonders.

Take the 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins, and walk into the park on Perkins. Best parking is at the boathouse lot near the spherical cage. Entry, via Bellevue near Children's Fairyland, is \$2 if the kiosk is occupied when you arrive (which it probably will be). Buy a 2-hour ticket and try to park in the boathouse lot, where no one checks how long cars sit.

Half Moon Bay Pelagic Trips

Saturday, July 28; Sundays, July 29, August 12, and September 9;

Mondays, August 27, September 10

Shearwater Journeys,

www.shearwaterjourneys.com

Cook's Petrel is a top target on this trip. Cost: \$146 per person for GGAS members, nonrefundable. Fuel surcharges, if needed, are not included. Parking is free. Send payment along with the full name, address, phone, cell phone, and e-mail of each person to Shearwater Journeys, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024. \$

Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

Friday, August 3, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Kaplan, 510.526.7609 (messages), LNKPLN@earthlink.net

Meet at the Tilden Nature Area/Little Farm and Environmental Education Center parking lot for this GGAS first Friday birdwalk. Today's theme: Whose Bird? The birds and the people they are named for. Restrooms are at the start and end, water at the start and midway. Walking is on a flat road and an easy trail with some switchbacks.

Monterey Bay Pelagic Trips

Fridays, August 3, 10, and 17; Friday, September 7; Tuesday, September 11; Wednesday, September 12; Thursday, September 13

Shearwater Journeys,

www.shearwaterjourneys.com

Trips out of Monterey Bay are classic summertime trips for albatrosses

and shearwaters, whales and dolphins. Cost: \$104 per person for GGAS members, nonrefundable. Fuel surcharges, if needed, are not included. Parking is \$7. Send payment along with the full name, address, phone, cell phone, and e-mail of each person to Shearwater Journeys, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024.

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

(Santa Clara County)

Saturday, August 4

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233,
kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 9 a.m. at the trailhead or at 8:30 a.m. at the Santa Clara/Great America Capitol Corridor Train Station. The ride from the station to Alviso County Park follows a trail and city streets. From Alviso we will ride on streets to Disk Dr. to look for Burrowing Owls, then will continue on to the NWR visitor center, make a circuit of the unpaved trail around the marsh, and return to Alviso County Park. Approximate distance is 15 miles. Trip concludes about noon. Bicycle helmet required. Bring lunch and liquids. Rain cancels. Leaders usually arrive by public transit, so delays are possible. It is advisable to call or e-mail for cell number and indicate how you are arriving.

Transit: Capitol Corridor Train #723 from Emeryville (EMY) departs at 7:20 a.m. We will return on Train #734 from Santa Clara (GAC) at 1:04 p.m. (next train is #736 at 2:34 p.m.). Arrive at the station well in advance to purchase your ticket and get on the platform; senior fares at a discount of 15 percent are available for those 62 and over. Contact Kathy if you want to participate in a 10-ride ticket from Emeryville. For Bay Area transit info, go to www.transit511.org. **Car:** Take I-880 south toward San Jose, then Hwy. 237 west for 2.2 mi and exit at North 1st St. Turn right on North 1st, which in about 1 mile becomes Taylor St. In one block turn right on Gold St., then turn left on Elizabeth St. and right on Hope St., and continue to Alviso County Park and the trailhead parking for Don Edwards NWR.

Farallon Islands Pelagic Trip

Sunday, August 5

Shearwater Journeys,
www.shearwaterjourneys.com

The specialty of this trip is the colorful Tufted Puffin. Shearwater Journeys has a 100 percent success rate in finding these seabirds. Brown Booby was a highlight on the 2011 trip. Cost: \$139 per

person for GGAS members, nonrefundable. Fuel surcharges, if needed, are not included. Parking is free. Send payment along with the full name, address, phone, cell phone, and e-mail of each person to Shearwater Journeys, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024.

Point Isabel Regional Shoreline

(Contra Costa County)

Friday, August 10, 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Alan Kaplan, 510.526.7609 (messages),
LNKPLN@earthlink.net

Meet at the Rydin Rd. entrance to Point Isabel (if you go past Costco, you've gone too far) for a look at the earliest shorebird returnees in their breeding plumage. Restrooms and water at the start. Dogs will be present in large numbers and variety. For a map, go to www.ebparks.org/parks/pt_isabel.

Hayward Regional Shoreline

(Alameda County)

Sunday, August 19, 8:30 a.m.
Rusty Scalf, rscalf@sonic.net,
510.666.9936

Meet at the East Bay Regional Park District parking lot at the end of Winton Ave. in Hayward, where we will leave some of our cars. Those who leave cars will ride with others to the end of Grant Ave. in San Leandro (a short, easy drive; maps will be provided). We will walk from the end of Grant to the end of Winton along the San Francisco Bay Trail, a distance of about 2 miles, looking for shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, and birds of the open water and open fields. We expect early shorebird migrants, some still in breeding plumage. No sign-up limit, but please e-mail Rusty if you plan to attend.

Snag Lake Backpack Trip

(Butte Volcanic National Park)

Friday – Monday, August 24 – 27
Robin Pulich; David Rice, 510.527.7210,
drice2@comcast.net

On this annual camping and birding trip to Lassen, we will backpack 3 miles to Snag Lake and spend three nights in primitive camping by a stream near a large meadow. We should see flocks of mixed warblers and other songbirds, plus

resident birds of the mountains, Bald Eagles, and migrating shorebirds. We will be above 6,000 feet. To avoid impact on the fragile habitat, the trip is limited to 10 people. Participants are responsible for their own gear and food. Some special meals can be arranged. Contact David Rice to reserve a space.

Abbotts Lagoon

(Point Reyes National Seashore)

Saturday, August 25, 9 a.m. – noon
Martha Westrich, 415.683.8059,
415.533.4470 (cell), marthawestrich.com

Meet at the parking lot at Abbotts Lagoon. Shorebirds should be beginning to come in. We should see land birds as well. Wrentits are present the year round. Ferruginous Hawks have been observed on the ground, and the Snowy Plovers may have babies. We'll look for other interesting birds. Martha invites participants to join her for lunch at a restaurant in Point Reyes after the trip. Contact her if you are interested.

Go west on St. Francis Drive past the main fork in the road, and right on Point Reyes Rd. toward Tomales Point. Continue until you see signs for Abbotts Lagoon and the parking lot on the left. Restrooms may not be available. Pretty, full moons. But walking in sand might be difficult.

California Audubon Bobcat Ranch

(Winters, Yuba County)

**Wednesday, September 19,
8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

Rich Cimino, rcimino@gmail.com

Bobcat Ranch, owned by Audubon California, is a lovely area of blue oak woodland and rangeland in the foothills just west of Winters, about 65 miles from Berkeley. Visiting the ranch is by special arrangement only, so this is an opportunity to see a remarkable place. We'll be joined by the ranch biologist, who will lead us on an easy walk around the ranch. Expected species are oak woodland/grassland birds, including Lark Sparrow, Golden Eagle, and Lewis's Woodpecker. Bring lunch and water. Directions will be provided to registered participants. Contact Rich Cimino to sign up. For information on the ranch, go to <http://ca.audubon.org/bobcat-ranch>.



BEACH CHALET RENOVATION

In late May, the San Francisco Planning Commission and the Recreation and Parks Commission voted to approve the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields renovation. The project would replace up to 11 acres of natural grass and trees in the western end of Golden Gate Park with artificial turf. The addition of 10 light towers, each 60 feet tall, would broadcast 150,000 watts of light into this historically dark part of the park.

The toxic nature of artificial turf is one reason that some people are opposed to the project. Golden Gate Audubon became involved because the changes will reduce the quality of the area for wildlife and for people who visit it to appreciate nature. Both the City of San Francisco's General Plan and the Golden Gate Master Plan mandate preservation of the historic natural character of the western part of the park. We are not against providing athletic fields for use by city residents. However, we advocate that fields be developed at an alternate site, identified in the EIR, rather than by converting an irreplaceable part of Golden Gate Park into a regional sports complex.

At the May meeting, Golden Gate Audubon spoke out against the project and the EIR, and is among the organizations that will consider appealing the city's decision. To find out more or get involved, contact mlynes@goldengateaudubon.org.

RESTORE BIRD HABITAT AT GGAS SITES

We invite you to join us for our monthly workdays at our restoration sites. For site details and directions, please go to www.goldengateaudubon.org/volunteer.

- Pier 94, San Francisco: July 7, August 4, 9 a.m. – noon.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, Oakland: July 21, August 18, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Golden Gate Park Bison Paddock, San Francisco: July 21, August 18, 9 a.m. – noon, with SF Recreation and Parks.
- Lands End East Wash, Presidio, San Francisco: August 18, 1 – 4 p.m., with the Parks Conservancy.

Mark your calendar for Coastal Cleanup Day on September 15.

BURROWING OWL DOCENT TRAINING

Every year, Western Burrowing Owls overwinter at Cesar Chavez Park in Berkeley. When the owls arrive in the fall, Golden Gate Audubon docents point out the owls to park users and talk about the need to protect these locally endangered birds. Docents are encouraged to make a commitment for site visits at least twice each month from September through March. Dates and times are flexible. Training for the new season will be held in September and is open to anyone interested in this program. If you'd like to attend, contact Volunteer Coordinator Noreen Weeden at nweeden@goldengateaudubon.org.

HELP GGAS BUILD NEST BOXES

This summer, Golden Gate Audubon volunteers will build nest boxes at a location in the East Bay. We will supply all the materials, tools, and instructions. In the fall, we will sell the boxes at a street fair, to help raise funds to support our programs. If you are interested in participating, contact nweeden@goldengateaudubon.org.

Classes

New Transit-Friendly Venue for Popular GGAS Class

Birds of the Bay Area, taught this fall by Eddie Bartley and Rusty Scaf, will be held at the Ed Roberts Campus, a brand-new building in Berkeley at 3075 Adeline Street. The Ashby BART station is directly under the campus and is convenient for people living in both the East Bay and San Francisco. There is abundant parking behind the building. Lectures: Wednesdays, 7–9 p.m., October 10–November 14. Field trips: weekends, October 13–November 16, with the last one being an overnight trip. Participants will visit habitats of all types, including fresh- and saltwater wetlands, woodlands, and grassland savannah, to study the avian denizens of these communities. Fee is \$105 for GGAS members, \$125 for nonmembers. To sign up, call the GGAS office at 510.843.2222.

For the schedule of fall classes at the Albany Adult School, check the GGAS website.

Birding with Joe Morlan

The fall semester of Joe Morlan's classes on North American Birds, endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon, starts in mid-September. Field Ornithology II, an in-depth study of land birds including warblers, towhees, and sparrows in two parts, meets Wednesdays, September 12 to October 24 and October 31 to December 12. Field Ornithology III, focusing on dowitchers, snipe, phalaropes, and gulls, meets on Thursdays, September 13 to October 25 and November 1 to December 13. All classes run from 7 to 9:15 p.m. and are held at the Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay Street, in San Francisco (free parking provided). Optional field trips are arranged for weekends. For information on fees, registration, and textbooks, go <http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmorlan/fall12.htm>. Registrants receive a \$15 discount for signing up a week early. Joe is the coordinator of the Northern California Birdbox sponsored by GGAS.

managed to count their way into first place with 56 species. "It's not about the number of birds we see, but about the experience a very small child has," said Louise. "Cora knows crow and Brewer's Blackbird, and robin, and California Towhee, and she will happily tell you all of them."

Top fundraising honors went to Noreen Weeden and Eddie Bartley, who raised \$3,023, followed by Ivan Samuels, Glen Tepke, Bob Lewis, Dan and Joan Murphy, and Chris and Gary Bard. "These top fundraisers are an amazing inspiration to all of us," said Diane Ross-Leech, Golden Gate Audubon board president. "But everyone who raised money through Birdathon is a star. The donations they generated will help us advocate on behalf of wildlife, restore crucial habitat like Pier 94, and educate the next generation of birders and conservationists."

Compilers of the Christmas Bird Count served as arbiters of the "best bird" awards and bestowed the following honors.

- Alameda County—Glen Tepke for Black Tern
- Contra Costa—Logan Kahle for Solitary Sandpiper, Blue Grosbeak, and Calliope Hummingbird
- San Francisco—Rockin' TVs for Marbled Murrelet
- California—Orange Blossom Special team of Bob Lewis and Dave Quady for Reddish Egret at Bolsa Chica in Orange County

Beyond the prize-winning feats, Birdathon highlights included a team of BabyBirders who had (mostly) never birded before; Ivan Samuels's famous Miwok-style birding trip in which he sighted 105 species in 24 hours without use of motorized vehicles, electronics, or optics; Josiah Clark's four-hour bicycle trip through San Francisco's Presidio and Crissy Field that netted 80 species; and the participation in the Hayward Harriers team by birder Ken Tucker of Dorset, England.

More than a hundred Golden Gate Audubon members and other bird lovers celebrated together on May 10 at the Brazil Building in Tilden Regional Park in

BIRDATHON 2012 continued on page 30



Steven Saejong, recipient of Mile E McKey Memorial Scholarship, with Education Director Kathleen DeCoster



Jacqueline Craig and Louise Harm, winners of the Contra Costa four-hour prize



Guest speaker Tom Stienstra, longtime San Francisco Chronicle columnist

Berkeley. Dinner highlights included guest speaker Tom Stienstra, outdoor columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and a display and auction of beautiful bird sculptures by Aimée Baldwin.

Attendees filled the room with applause for both the Birdathon winners and the recipients of other Golden Gate Audubon honors. The second annual Miles T. McKey Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Steven Saefong, an Oakland High School senior who has been a pillar of our Eco-Education program for the past two years. Steven has assisted in and led activities for schoolchildren and their families on more than 25 trips to Muir Beach and Alcatraz. He also has taken part in numerous Earth Day and coastal cleanup days and habitat restoration events.

Steven has presented at two California Audubon Assemblies on the impact of marine debris on Pacific Ocean wildlife and on "what conservation means to me." Both presentations received standing ovations and inspired California Audubon to consult with Golden Gate Audubon about our model internship program in the development of the new California Audubon



Dan and Joan Murphy, two of the top Birdathon fundraisers.



Eddie Bartley, whose team, The Rockin' TV's, won the top fundraising award.

statewide high school program.

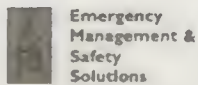
In other awards, Facebook photo contest prizes went to Allen Hirsch (see photo on page 2), David Assmann (see photo at right), and Peri Michel. The Elsie Roemer Conservation Award was presented to the team that produced the *Alameda County Breeding Bird Atlas*, and the Paul Covel Conservation Education Award went to Hilary Powers and Kisha Mitchell-Mellor (see page 2).

All photographs of the Birdathon 2012 dinner are by Charles Denson.



David Assmann's Lesser Goldfinch, one of the Birdathon 2012 Facebook photo contest winners.

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SNOWY PLOVERS from page 1

"on-leash dogs," and "off-leash dogs." Recreational use of the WPA peaked in 2008–2009 with approximately 46.7 users per hour, but has appeared to level off at approximately 14.2 users in 2010–2011 and 2011–2012. On Ocean Beach, observers recorded up to 36 Snowy Plovers present in sections of the beach at one time.

Despite the notable decrease in recreational use in the WPA in recent years, the disturbance rate per survey hour remains consistent at between 1.04 to 1.22 disturbances to the Snowy Plovers per hour. The highest source of disturbance appears to be recreational users crossing the dunes in the WPA, especially off-leash dogs that wander away from owners who are walking along the waterline. At Ocean Beach, observers recorded an average of 10.9 off-leash dogs per hour, or approximately 59 percent of all dogs observed.

The importance of the two sites is demonstrated in the plovers' resilience despite persistent disturbances. Observers at the WPA and Ocean Beach record the unique

color-bands on some of the plovers' legs, which allow them to identify and track individuals and report their findings back to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Observations of color-banded individuals at Crissy Field, for example, have shown that at least one bird has returned to the WPA regularly for the past five years.

In recent years, researchers have improved their study of the impacts of disturbances on the wintering grounds. Previously, research focused on disturbances at the breeding grounds, which can have direct negative impacts on reproductive success. Now, we are getting a clearer understanding that the plovers need to be protected on their wintering grounds as well—when they are trying to forage, rest, and prepare for migration or the breeding season. We also know that the plovers can be mobile. They move along Ocean Beach or between the San Francisco beaches and other sites—demonstrating that we need to conserve multiple areas to provide safe wintering grounds in changing conditions.

Notably, the data collected by the vol-

unteers indicate that compliance with the requirement that dogs be kept on-leash in the WPA has increased substantially in recent years. From 2006 through 2010, observers recorded a compliance rate between 27 and 34 percent. In the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 seasons, compliance was at 82 percent and 62 percent, respectively. It is likely that publicity surrounding the proposed GGNRA Dog Management Plan helped dog owners remember the compliance requirement in the WPA. Responsible dog owners should be congratulated for improving compliance with the leash requirement and encouraged to continue the effort.

The Snowy Plover monitoring project is entirely organized and operated by Golden Gate Audubon volunteers, with very little staff support. This group deserves a lot of recognition for their efforts and their contribution to our understanding of plovers in San Francisco. To get involved in the Snowy Plover monitoring project, please contact me at mlynes@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.6551.

—Mike Lynes, Conservation Director